

Issue # 8

September 12, 2007

# The Monthly Minute

## with State Senator John Pappageorge

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### Back to School Update: Cost-Savings Legislation Passed by Senate

Dear Friend:

As our students head back to school, I want to update you on some important legislative news, including our efforts to keep more money in the classroom.

Our state is currently facing between a \$1.2 billion and \$1.8 billion deficit that must be filled before October 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. Despite these tough economic times, my colleagues and I in the Senate are committed to ensuring Michigan's children receive the best education we can provide.

When we faced nearly a \$1 billion deficit for the current fiscal year, we were able to close the deficit without reducing funding to our schools. Education is the single greatest expenditure in our state's budget. In the 2006-07 fiscal year alone, K-12 funding received \$13.1 billion out of the \$41.4 billion state budget.

I recently supported a package of bills that will save school districts millions of dollars through sensible reforms. Health insurance rates have increased by double-digits each year from 2000 to 2006, intensifying the burden felt by schools and local governments.

Senate Bills 418-421 would reduce the cost of health benefits for school districts and other public employers while maintaining excellent benefits for their employees. The legislation would allow school districts to pool medical, dental and optical benefits and require increased access to claims and other data to create the insurance pools. While participation in the medical pools would be voluntary, schools would be required to competitively solicit four bids for fully insured coverage. Through competitive bidding and pooling, school districts could save about eight percent a year without reducing health care benefits or coverage.

Senate Bill 547 would require new school employees to work a certain number of years before receiving retirement health care. The bill also sets up a graded system for retirement health care benefits, much like the system established for new state employees. This plan is estimated to save our schools a minimum of \$59 million in the first year alone. These reforms will help keep more taxpayer dollars in the classroom. Having more money available to educate our children helps alleviate the threat of layoffs and reductions of school programs. This legislation recently passed the Senate and is now before the House for consideration.

In addition to these reforms, I recently introduced a proposal to establish a "back-to-school tax holiday". My bill is designed to bring much needed relief to residents while stimulating retail spending across the state. Specifically, my legislation will implement a sales tax holiday for the first fifteen days of September on up to \$150 in clothing and another \$50 on school supplies. According to the National Retailers Federation, families will spend an average of \$563 on back-to-school supplies, up 6.9 percent from last year. Not only will my bill help alleviate some of the financial burden parents face in preparing their children for school, it will also be an economic boost for retailers. More than 10 states already provide a "back-to-school tax holiday."

As a parent, I know that back-to-school can be both exciting and stressful at the same time. For more news regarding education matters in Michigan, please visit my website at [www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com](http://www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com) and click on the education update link. Best wishes for a promising new school year.

Sincerely,

John Pappageorge

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#### Did You know:



**Michigan dedicates 31.4 percent of the state budget to education funding, ranking second among all the states.**

## Senator Pappageorge Supports Bill that will Shrink State Government & Save Millions

Senator Pappageorge recently voted in support of legislation that will reduce the size of state government while offering some state workers the option of early retirement.

Senate Bill 689 could save Michigan nearly \$190 million by offering early-retirement options to state employees with a combined age

and years of service of 75 years. About 12,000 of the existing 52,000 state employees would be eligible for retirement under this measure. An additional 3,000 employees could purchase credits to become eligible for the retirement.

The 2002 early-retirement process resulted in the replacement of one out of every three retired employ-

ees, a ratio of one out of every four is the basis for the projected savings in this year's proposal. Conservation officers, corrections officers and state troopers would be exempted from the legislation.

SB 689 has passed the Senate and now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

## Early Primary Law Enacted

Michigan now has one of the earliest primaries in the nation with recently enacted legislation establishing a joint presidential primary on Jan. 15, 2008.

Senate Bill 624 makes Michigan the third state in line behind Iowa and New Hampshire, whose state laws require them to be first and second, respectively. It is widely acknowledged that a joint primary would likely attract more than 2

million voters to the polls, whereas, were the parties to hold a caucus or convention, roughly 100,000 Democrats and only 4,000 to 6,000 Republicans would participate.

Prior law held Michigan to a primary on Feb. 26, 2008, weeks after the parties' presidential nominees would have presumably been decided. Senate Republicans believe the measure is needed to raise Michigan's profile on the national



stage and to ensure the economic issues important to us are addressed in the presidential campaign.

## Senator Pappageorge Welcomes New District Representative

Senator Pappageorge is pleased to announce his new director of district affairs, Corinne Khederian of Bloomfield Township.



"I am excited to have Corinne on board" Pappageorge said. "She is an extremely tal-

ented and committed individual. Corinne knows the local communities in this Senate district very well,

and has extensive insight of the issues facing area residents."

Khederian, an attorney, is active in her community. She has served in a variety of capacities, including:

- Chair of Bloomfield Township Zoning Board of Appeals
- Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition Board Member
- Board Member of the Great Lakes Chapter of the Armenian Assembly of America

- Room Mother at her Children's School

"This is a wonderful opportunity to further serve my community" Khederian said. "I am honored to have been selected to assist Senator Pappageorge. I look forward to helping the residents of the 13th District in any way possible."

Khederian is married to attorney Richard Khederian. The couple resides in Bloomfield Township with their two children.

## Court Ruling Upholds Ballast Water Law and Urges More State Action

U.S. District Judge John Feikens recently dismissed a lawsuit filed by nine shipping companies and associations. The lawsuit sought to overturn a Michigan law which regulates the discharge of ballast water by oceangoing ships. The measure was sponsored by Senate Republicans in 2005.

The decision reached by Judge Feikens was a great success for Michigan and the entire Great Lakes region. It confirms that states have the authority to regulate commerce if there is a valid threat to the public welfare. The introduction of invasive species to

the Great Lakes causes many problems for the state's ecosystem. Michigan is a recognized leader for legislation aimed at protecting the Great Lakes. Senate Republicans are currently working on other initiatives that will further protect the lakes, including passage of the Great Lakes Compact.

A ballast water bill that mirrors Michigan law was recently introduced by the Ohio House of Representatives. It would allow Ohio to regulate the discharge of ballast water from oceangoing ships into portions of Lake Erie.

Invasive species have cost citizens and businesses a staggering \$10

billion or more during the past decade. One report estimates that Great Lakes fisheries spend \$12 million a year to control sea lamprey, \$30 million to control zebra mussels and \$119 million a year because of the ruffe. It costs each individual power company more than \$1 million per year to deal with zebra mussels on intake pipes.



## Comprehensive Legislation to Assist Michigan Military Personnel Announced

A bipartisan group of state lawmakers at the Capitol recently introduced a comprehensive legislative package to assist Michigan military personnel.

"The men and women who serve in the armed forces risk their lives everyday to protect ours," said Sen. Pappageorge, vice-chair of the Senate Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs committee. "As a veteran I know firsthand how important it is to do everything we can to thank and support the men and women that fight for our freedom."

The bipartisan plan, which includes 33 bills and 9 resolutions, is unprecedented in its approach to support Michigan veterans. Three bills and a resolution were introduced by Senator Pappageorge.

The plan would establish a "Michigan Patriot Business" designation for companies with at least

a 50 percent ownership by an active service member or veteran of the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts. The Michigan Economic Development Corp. would promote these businesses on its website and the Michigan Strategic Fund would maintain a list of the qualified businesses.

The legislative package allows spouses and children of an armed forces member stationed in Michigan to be considered a resident when determining college tuition and permits children of active military personnel who are transferred out of state to retain their in-state residency status for determining college tuition.

One of Senator Pappageorge's bills, Senate Bill 735, would establish a Disabled Veteran Tuition Assistance program granting disabled veterans a tuition grant for a public university based on the percentage

of their disability. Other bills in the package would:

- Allow veterans to participate in a post traumatic stress disorder program to help support their transition from military back to civilian life;
- Increase a veteran's preference in state purchasing from the current 3 percent to 5 percent of total expenditures for construction, goods and services;
- Prohibit the lapse of life insurance policies for active duty military personnel; and
- Safeguard the property of military personnel from sale, foreclosure or seizure of property for mortgage nonpayment while they are serving and for six months after they return from active duty.

# Resource Guide for Parents

Michigan School Report Cards  
• <https://oeaa.state.mi.us/ayp/>

School Matters (Analysis of School District Performance)  
• [www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com)

School Violence Hotline  
1-800-815-TIPS  
• [www.michigan.gov/safeschools](http://www.michigan.gov/safeschools)

Cyber Tip and Internet Crimes Against Children Hotline  
• 1-877-529-2373

New High School Graduation Requirements  
• [www.michigan.gov/highschool](http://www.michigan.gov/highschool)

Michigan E-Library (MeL Kids)  
• [www.mel.org](http://www.mel.org)

U.S. Government Kids' Site  
• [www.kids.gov](http://www.kids.gov)

MI Child (Health Insurance for Uninsured Children)  
• 1-888-988-6300

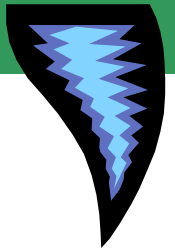
Michigan Promise Scholarship  
[www.michigan.gov/promise](http://www.michigan.gov/promise)  
• 1-888-447-2687

Michigan Education Trust  
• [www.setwithmet.com](http://www.setwithmet.com) or  
1-800-MET-4-KID

Michigan Education Savings Plan  
[www.misaves.com](http://www.misaves.com)  
• 1-877-861-MESP



## National Preparedness Month



Is your family prepared for an emergency situation? National Preparedness Month recognizes the need to have essential supplies on hand if an emergency situation arises. The Department of Homeland Security through [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) recommends keeping the following materials in your basic emergency supply kit:



Water: One gallon of water per person per day for at least 3 days for drinking and sanitation;



Flashlight and extra batteries



Food: At least a 3 day supply of non-perishable food & can opener



First-Aid Kit



Battery-powered radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with extra batteries for both



Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities



Local maps and a whistle to signal for help



### Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or comments regarding information in this newsletter, or wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list, please contact my office at the following information:

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